

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 00420 061441Z

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ACTION COME-00

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 EB-07 ISO-00 /017 W

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R 051241Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2578

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 420

STATE PASS COMMERCE FRO HERBERT SOCKS, SPECIAL ACTIVITIES
DIV.

BEIRUT FOR COMATT, RTDO

JIDDA/DHAHRAN PASS TO ADVANCEMAN GEORGE T. BECK

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, BTRA, SY

SUBJ: RAILWAY EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY MISSION

REF: A. STATE 009760 AND PREVIOUS; B. STATE 022104, D.
STATE 024661

1. SUMMARY. COMMERCE ACTION GROUP NEAR EAST (CAGNE) RAILWAY
EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY MISSION VISIT TO SYRIA IS VERY
APPROPRIATE AND WE BELIEVE WILL BE WARMLY WELCOMED BY SARG.
EMBASSY LOOKS FORWARD TO CONSULTATIONS WITH ADVANCEMAN BECK
IN DAMASCUS FEB. 14-17. RESPONSES TO REFTELS AND FURTHER
QUESTIONS NOTED BELOW.
END SUMMARY.

2. REGRET PRESS OF OTHER URGENT BUSINESS HAD
DELAYED OUR REPLY ON PROPOSED RAILWAY EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY
MISSION. WE BELIEVE MISSION WILL FIND EAGER WELCOME IN
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 00420 061441Z

SYRIA AND EMBASSY SUBMITTING OFFICIAL NOTE TO FOREIGN MINISTRY
FEB 5. MISSION PERIOD IN SYRIA, MARCH 6-10 WILL OVERLAP WITH

GENERAL TYPE TRADE MISSION FROM U.K., BUT SO FAR WE SEE NO CONFLICT.

3. HOWEVER, WITH MISSION ARRIVAL THURSDAY, MARCH 6 AT 2145; FRIDAY, MARCH 7 NORMAL NON-WORKING DAY IN SYRIA; AND SATURDAY, MARCH 8, SYRIAN REVOLUTION DAY NATIONAL HOLIDAY, MISSION MAY WELL HAVE TO CONCENTRATE EFFORTS DURING SUNDAY, MARCH 9 AND FULL DAY MONDAY, MARCH 10. THIS WOULD MEAN MARCH 11 DRIVE DAMASCUS/AMMAN IF MISSION MEMBERS DECIDE TO VISIT AMMAN. DRIVE WOULD PROVIDE EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO VIEW PART OF HISTORIC HIJAZ RAILWAY FROM DAMASCUS TO AMMAN AND POINTS SOUTH (BEIRUT 15334, 12/26/74). WE WILL BE WORKING UP DRAFT SCHEDULE FOR GROUP IN ANTICIPATION OF DISCUSSION WITH ADVANCEMAN BECK.

4. HOTELS: RESERVATIONS CONFIRMED AT SEMIRAMIS HOTEL; SINGLE FEB 14, 15, 16 FOR BECK; 16 SINGLES MARCH 6, 7, 8, AND 9 FOR MISSION. QUESTION: SHOULD WE ADD ANOTHER NIGHT, MARCH 10, IF ABOVE MOVE TO AMMAN PLANNED FOR MARCH 11? DAMASCUS HOTEL SITUATION CAN BECOME JAMPACKED AND FIRST CLASS HOTEL SUCH AS SEMIRAMIS NEEDS AS MUCH ADVANCE INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE RE REQUIRED ACCOMMODATIONS, CANCELLATIONS, ETC. ALSO, STATE VISITS USUALLY TAKE UP ALL SPACE IN TWO FIRST-CLASS HOTELS IN DAMASCUS. WE KNOW OF NO SUCH VISITS MARCH 6-10, BUT WILL NEED CAREFUL AND CONTINUAL GUIDANCE FROM MISSION ON HOTEL NEEDS.

4. TRAVEL

A. BECK: SINCE REF B INDICATES BECK WILL BE IN LEBANON OVER 24 HOURS, HE CANNOT TAKE PANAM 110 FOR FLIGHT TO DAMASCUS (WHICH IN ANY EVENT DOES NOT OPERATE BEIRUT/DAMASCUS ON FRIDAY). SUGGEST BECK PLAN TO ARRIVE VIA TAXI FROM BEIRUT AROUND 1600, FRIDAY, FEB 14, AND PROCEED DIRECTLY TO EMBASSY FOR INITIAL REVIEW OF FILE MATERIAL WITH DCM AND ECON/CML SECRETARY PATRICIA DORSEY. CONTROL OFFICER (ECON/CML OFF)
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PAGE 03 DAMASC 00420 061441Z

RODERICK M. WRIGHT WILL BE ATTENDING CONFERENCE IN TUNIS FEB 10-14 AND CURRENTLY SCHEDULED RETURNED FROM TUNIS FEB 14 VIA ROME (TU 952) AND THEN TO BEIRUT (PA 110), ETA 1550, AND THEN DRIVE TO DAMASCUS ARRIVING AROUND 2000 FOR DISCUSSION WITH BECK AT SEMIRAMIS HOTEL. FEB 15 AND 16 ARE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT WORKING DAYS AND CAN BE SPENT IN APPOINTMENTS WITH APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS SET UP IN ADVANCE BY WRIGHT AND MISS DORSEY. BECK SHOULD EXPECT TO DEPART FOR CAIRO VIA RB 351 AT 1200, MONDAY, FEB 17, ETA 1400

ACCORDING CURRENT SCHEDULE (VICE 1700 ETD IN REF B).

B. MISSION

THURSDAY, MARCH 7 ETA 2145 VIA RB 382 FROM JIDDA
LOOKS OK ACCORDING CURRENT SCHEDULES AND NO CHANGE
EXPECTED.

5. BROCHURES AND MATERIAL.

WILL BE MOST USEFUL IF BECK BRINGS WITH HIM MISSION
BROCHURE IN ARABIC OR WE RECEIVE FROM CAIRO PER REF B
AT LEAST BY FEB 24. WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM COMMERCE
FOLLOWING COMPANY MATERIAL TO DATE: KORODY-COLYER (15),
GE (VERY GENERAL PUBLICATION, 7), WOODS INDUSTRIES, INC.
(8, BUT THIS FIRM NOT LISTED IN STATE 009760), PULLMAN
STANDARD (15), GENERAL MOTORS OVERSEAS (9 EACH ON 5
DIFFERENT LOCOMOTIVES), AND FORD, BACON AND DAVIS (36).
REQUEST COMMERCE/SOCKS INFORM US SOONEST WHEN WE MAY
EXPECT ADDITIONAL MATERIAL.

6. TRANSPORTATION.

TAXIS CAN EASILY BE RENTED FOR MISSION MOVEMENT IN
DAMASCUS AND TO HOMS OR OTHER POINTS IN SYRIA. WITH
POSSIBLY SHORTENED WORKING PERIOD, MARCH 9, AND 10,
WOULD MISSION CONSIDER CHARTERING SYRIAN AIR FORCE
HELICOPTERS (SOVIET BUILT) IN ORDER TO SEE MAJOR
RAIL CENTERS AND LINE CONSTRUCTION IN NORTHER SYRIA.
WE HAVE NO IDEA WHETHER THIS CAN BE ARRANGED (SARG
DID MAKE ONE AVAILABLE TO IBRD PRESIDENT MCNAMARA
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PAGE 04 DAMASC 00420 061441Z

LAST NOVEMBER), BUT WOULD APPRECIATE INITIAL REACTION
TO THIS IDEA AND INDICATION OF BUDGET THAT COULD BE
ALLOCATED FOR THIS PURPOSE.
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